

THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 2022

Courant Community

LOCAL NEWS

Manchester a steampunk hub



Silk City Steampunk organizer David Carlson takes a break from the Steampunk Stroll in Manchester, in the summer of 2020. Story, more photos, pages 8-9. **STEVE SMITH/COURANT COMMUNITY**

LOCAL NEWS



Kids were able to bowl in the TKB Club basement. **STEVE SMITH/COURANT COMMUNITY**

Circle of Moms meets for holiday party

Families and police gathered for a buffet meal, followed by many games and activities. **Page 5**

LOCAL NEWS

High school athletes required to mask up

Athletic directors said that sometimes it can be difficult to enforce mask policy, especially on the court. **Page 3**

LOCAL NEWS

Plant-based restaurant 21 Oak closes its doors

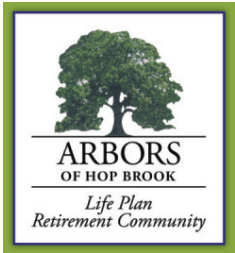
The restaurant's owner and executive chef tried to make a go of it during the pandemic. **Page 7**

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Stafford Prayer Shawl Ministry to meet in January

STAFFORD — The Stafford Prayer Shawl Ministry meets from 2 to 3 p.m. the second Monday of each month, except July and August, in the Stafford Public Library, 10 Levinthal Run.

The next meeting is Monday, Jan. 10. The group welcomes individuals who would like to attend and knit, crochet, or quilt prayer shawls. Members will teach you to knit or crochet.

If you cannot make the meeting but want to make prayer shawls at home, someone will pick them up. If you or your pastor knows of anyone who could use a prayer shawl, they will arrange for one to be picked up.

Contact Karen at 860-982-5896 for information or pickup arrangements. All are welcome. If the library is closed due to weather, the Prayer Shawl Ministry meeting will be canceled also.

Candlelight Writing Workshops hosting winter, spring classes

GLASTONBURY — Candlelight Writing Workshops, founded by Jane Gordon Julien, presents the following classes. Send an email to janegordonjulien@gmail.com for more information or to register. Class sizes are limited. The meeting locations are to be determined, depending on the state of the pandemic.

Creative Writing 101 starts in late February and runs for six weeks. Tell a story. Learn craft. Explore your creativity. Alone, writing can be hard. In the context of a writing community, you'll find it far easier. This craft class and writing workshop for beginning and intermediate writers will inspire you to get moving with your writing.

The workshop begins Monday, Feb. 21, at 6 p.m. Cost is \$300. A non-refundable deposit of \$150 holds your place.

Advanced Creative Writing starts in early April. You've started and stopped and are struggling to maintain consistency and motivation in the fractured world we live in. Join this workshop, advance your craft, and commit to creating the work.

The workshop begins Thursday, April 7, and runs for six weeks. The cost is \$300. A

non-refundable deposit of \$150 holds your place.

Julien is a career journalist and regular contributor to The New York Times, and winner of numerous awards from state and national press associations. She is the founder of Candlelight Writing Workshops and also authors an award-winning blog, Notes on Writing, at janegordonjulien.com. Her writing has appeared in the anthology "Words Matter: Writing to Make a Difference," The Bellevue Literary Review, Literary Mama, Northeast, Newsday, The LA Times, and more.

She has served as an adjunct journalism professor at the University of Alabama-Birmingham and a guest lecturer at the University of Connecticut. She holds a master's degree from Sarah Lawrence College, where she was an editor at the literary journal Lumina, and a bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

Library plans Tween Code Club, Middle School Nights

MANCHESTER — The Tween Code Club will meet at the Manchester Public Library, 586 Main St., from 3 to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 18. The club is for those in grades 6 to 8. Learn the basics of block coding and meet other coders. The club mainly uses Scratch and Ozoblockly. To register, call 860-645-0821.

Middle School Nights will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays, Jan. 12, 19, and 26, for grades 6 through 8. Play games and eat snacks.

Manchester Women's Club to meet at high school

MANCHESTER — The Manchester Women's Club will meet at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 11, at Manchester High School, 134 Middle Turnpike E., in the freshman wing teacher's lounge.

The club does a wide variety of volunteer activities to help others in the community, such as Little Free Libraries for children, projects for veterans and MACC, as well as social activities to get to know each other.

Visit www.manchesterwomensclub.org, <https://www.facebook.com/manchester-womensclub> or email manchesterctwomensclub@gmail.com for more information.

Library showing two films in January

SOUTH WINDSOR — The South Windsor Public Library, 1550 Sullivan Ave., is hosting the following programs. Call 860-644-1541 or email sandy@libraryconnection.info for more information.

"Delicatessen," a 1991 French post-apocalyptic black comedy film, will be shown on Tuesday, Jan. 11, at 6:30 p.m. Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, starring Dominique Pinon and Marie-Laure Dougnac, the film is rated "R" and is approximately 100 minutes long. No registration is necessary to attend.

On Thursday, Jan. 13, at 2 p.m., the library will show "My Darling Clementine," a western where Henry Fonda stars as Wyatt Earp. The film is from 1946 and is directed by John Ford. No registration is necessary to attend.

Author talk taking place at Wood Library

SOUTH WINDSOR — Wood Memorial Library, 783 Main St., will host author Gail Ward Olmsted on Jan. 13 from 6 to 7 p.m. Olmsted will talk about her new historical fiction novel, Landscape of a Marriage: Central Park Was Only the Beginning.

Learn about Hartford born, park designer, Fredrick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted effect during this 45 minute presentation, followed by Q&A. Explore the impact his parks have made, and some little-known facts on Fredrick Olmsted, who is an ancestor of her husband's, and Central Park. Co-sponsored with Book Club on the Go., Landscape of a Marriage will be available for purchase and signing at the event. The snow date is Jan. 20.

January Series of Calvin University coming to South Windsor

SOUTH WINDSOR — The award-winning January Series of Calvin University is coming to South Windsor. From Jan. 10 through Jan. 28, 2022, Avery Street Christian Reformed Church, 661 Avery St., will be one of the remote webcast locations worldwide to broadcast one of North America's leading lecture and cultural arts series. The church will follow COVID safety protocols recom-

mended by the town.

A few of the world-renowned storytellers on the 2022 docket include Sarah Stewart Holland and Beth Silvers, co-hosts of the popular podcasts, Pantsuit Politics and The Nuanced Life; Max Stossel, an award-winning artist named by Forbes as one of the best storytellers of the year; Brad Montague, who is a New York Times best-selling author and creator of the hit web series "Kid President," and an illustrator whose work is regularly featured in Joanna Gaines' The Magnolia Journal; and Rick Steves, television host and guidebook author. Visit <http://www.calvin.edu/january> for a full list of speakers and topics.

The January Series lectures will be videostreamed live at Avery Street Church from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, starting Jan. 10 and ending Jan. 28. The lectures are free and open to the public.

In 2022, the January Series noontime lectures will also be available for viewing on one's personal device. Details on how to register for these 15 presentations are available on the January Series website.

For more information about the January Series, contact Cal Hulstein at calhulstein@cox.net or call the church office at 860-644-2731.

Winter farmers market resumes in January

ELLINGTON — The Ellington Indoor Winter Farmers Market will take place from 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 8, at Ellington High School, 37 Maple St.

More than 30 vendors will sell wares in the high school gymnasium, including local and fresh produce, meat, poultry, seafood, dairy, eggs, baked goods, prepared foods, sauces, elixirs, honey, maple syrup and more. Visit <https://www.ellingtonfarmersmarket.com> for more information.

Windsor Locks Library hosting snowman craft

WINDSOR LOCKS — Children are invited to create a snowman windsock craft at the Windsor Locks Library, 28 Main St., during open hours from Monday, Jan. 10, through Saturday, Jan. 15.

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Courant Community

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Send press releases, community events and photos, news tips or letters to the editor to community@courant.com.

To submit Good Neighbor items, birthday greetings, engagement or wedding announcements, email community@courant.com.

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HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Mask rule for players remains a challenge to enforce

By Lori Riley
Hartford Courant

It's become a familiar sight at high school basketball games. Athletes are wearing their masks below their noses or on their chins as they play.

High school athletes in Connecticut are required to wear masks at all times: at practice, on the bench and during competition. The only exceptions are what the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference states are for safety purposes. Wrestlers, swimmers, gymnasts and throwers and jumpers in indoor track and field do not have to wear masks when they are competing but must wear them before and after competition.

The mask rule was set to expire Dec. 23 for vaccinated athletes, but the Connecticut Department of Health mandated that it stay in place due to the recent COVID-19 surge.

Athletic directors said that sometimes it can be difficult to enforce mask policy, especially on the basketball court.

"I did notice at our first game some kids were wearing them below their nose. I said to the coaches, 'Hey, they need to get those masks up,'" Bloomfield athletic director Tammy Schondelmayer said. "It's hard to police. The minute you start running, it slips. We've been resending the message."

"[CIAC officials] talked about it on [a call to athletic directors on Dec. 21], if the kids are violating the policy, just stopping the game and making the kids pull them up. If they fall down again, stop the game again; they can pull them up again."

On Dec. 16, the day after the start of boys' basketball competition, CIAC executive director Glenn Lungarini sent a letter to athletic directors, pointing out the lack of enforcement of the mask policy.

"While many of you continue to emphasize the importance of strict adherence, we are concerned that the loose adherence of some to current mask requirements and, in some instances, the conspicuous failure to comply with current COVID-19 rules and regulations that were witnessed during the

opening night of boys' basketball, the winter sports season is not on course for a similar level of success [as the fall season]," Lungarini wrote in the email.

Jason Siegal, the athletic director for Conard and Hall high schools in West Hartford, echoed Schondelmayer's concerns about enforcing the mask policy.

"It's a challenge," he said. "It really is. We do the best we can. We remind kids constantly, constantly. It's also a challenge with a handful of spectators, game in and game out."

"Take basketball, the way the game is played, you bump into one another and kids are so focused on playing defense, it falls down and it's hard to remember to pull it back up. During breaks, our coaches are doing their best to remind them, 'Keep it up.'"

In Cheshire, athletic director Steve Trifone said being the "mask police" has become "almost a full-time job" at some athletic events.

"I really want take my hat off to my coaches who are really pushing our kids to keep it on," he said last week. "We address it when visiting teams come. We say, 'Hey, we're really going to enforce our mask rule.' Our trainer enforces our mask rule. It's just another added burden into the contest. We're trying to keep everybody safe, but it's another thing we have to do. We have no problem yelling during the game, 'Hey, pull that mask up.'"

"Our parents have been pretty good about it. We have some parents who are defiant, and we have to deal with that, but for the most part our parents have been pretty good."

E.O. Smith athletic director Dan Uriano said that part of the problem stemmed from the fact that some athletes, such as wrestlers, didn't have to wear masks during competition, while basketball players did.

"From a facility management perspective, it would have been much easier to be consistent and fair if there was a vaccination requirement for all athletes," he said. "Because the inconsistencies are exacerbating problems that existed already."

Lori Riley can be reached at lriley@courant.com.



Northwest Catholic's London Jemison fouls Farmington's Nick Duncan during a Dec. 16 game in Farmington. The CIAC requires that players wear masks at all times, but they often end up below a player's nose or under the chin during play. **STAN GODLEWSKI / SPECIAL TO THE COURANT**



Cromwell's Jessica Grodzicki looks to shoot as Pomperaug's Megan Reilly, left, and Sophia Zahran defend. Keeping masks in place has been a struggle for players. **JESSICA HILL / SPECIAL TO THE COURANT**

Community News

from Page 2

The craft is best for children ages 3 to 8. No registration is required.

Adult reading challenge logs for 2022 are now available for pickup at the Windsor Locks Library circulation desk. Any adult with a library card is eligible to participate. Complete biweekly and bonus challenges throughout the year and receive a prize based on the amount of challenges completed. The reading log lists categories and suggested dates. Read as many or as few books as you'd like.

American Legion announces change to family breakfast date

WINDSOR LOCKS — Gensi-Viola Post No. 36, The American Legion of Windsor Locks, canceled the Jan. 2 family breakfast due to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases. The next breakfast will take place on Sunday, Feb. 6.

Canoe race raises \$4,700 for food, fuel banks

WINDSOR — The Kiwanis Club of Windsor held its annual canoe race to benefit the Windsor Food and Fuel Banks. The race was held on the town green, in conjunction with the Jaycee Chili-Fest. Civic organizations filled their canoes with food or cash donations. This year's event brought in 2,274 pounds of food and \$4,745 in cash.

Participating groups included the Windsor Women's club, the Junior Women's club, Windsor Town employees, the Kiwanis club and the general public. Over 41,000 pounds of food and over \$61,000 have been collected at this annual event throughout the years.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS FOR TODAY'S PUZZLE



The town employees were presented with a trophy for the most combined donations. The Windsor Junior Women's club donated the most food and the Windsor Women's club had the best dressed canoe. The Kiwanis thank all the participating groups for making this another successful event.

Email windsorkiwanis@gmail.com for more information.

Library hosting session on domestic abuse signs, services available

EAST WINDSOR — The Warehouse Point Library will host an informational Zoom session on what domestic abuse is, warning signs and services The Network provides on Tuesday, Jan. 11, at 11 a.m.

The Network is a nonprofit organization that provides free services to domestic abuse victims and their families. Their mission is to assist families and individuals who have experienced domestic and intimate partner violence, educate to promote healthy relationships, and advocate for safer communities. The latest initiative includes educating people about domestic abuse.

With the recent pandemic, Connecticut especially has seen a rise in domestic abuse and for various reasons, many cases go unreported every year.

They hope by educating more people, more cases will be reported, and more victims will be helped.

Visit www.warehousepointlibrary.info to register online. A Zoom link will be sent via email before the day of the program. Contact the library at 860-623-5482 with questions.

Enfield Public Library hosting storytime, spooky CT tales

ENFIELD — The Enfield Public Library, 104 Middle Road, is hosting the following events. Visit <https://www.enfieldpubliclibrary.org> or call 860-763-7518 for more information.

Registration for storytimes at the Enfield Public Library will begin Monday, Jan. 10, at 9 a.m. in the Children's Room and continues through the rest of the week.

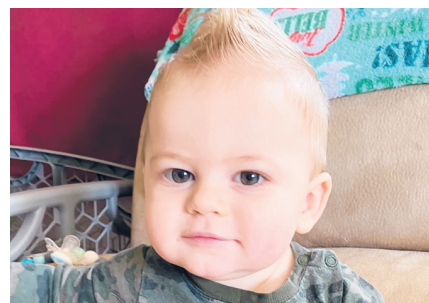
"Time for Twos" will meet at either 9:30 a.m. on Tuesdays or 10:30 a.m. on Thursdays. A caregiver must accompany each child. "Terrific Threes" will meet on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. "Fantastic Fours and Fives" will meet on Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. "Marvelous Threes & Fours" will meet on Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.

Sign-up will be for one session only and for only one storytime per week. Storytimes begin the week of Jan. 23.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Courant Community will print a current birthday photo FREE in one edition. Submit a current photo and 15-word description including name, age, birthday, town, your name, daytime phone number to community@courant.com or to Courant Community, P.O. Box 569, Hartford, CT 06141. Please submit three weeks in advance to avoid disappointment.



Happy 1st Birthday, Ash (1/13): "Your arrival in 2021 made it a year to remember! Excited to see what's next. Love, Grandma."



Happy 5th Birthday, Lorenzo (1/10): "You are loved today, tomorrow and always. Love, Mom, Dad Elena, and Igor."



Happy 3rd Birthday, Himaa (1/14): "Cheers to our Little Lark entering the fourth round in the sky of life!"



Happy 4th Birthday, Shriya (1/16): "Your baba, mommy, and Sam bhai love you to the moon and back."



Happy 6th Birthday, Skylynn May (1/4): "To our beautiful darling girl, we all love you so much! Love, Great Grandma Rose."



Happy 6th Birthday, Jackson (1/3): "We love you so much! Mom, Dad, Sissy, and Naynay."



Happy 4th Birthday, Jak (1/14): "To our little superhero. We love you, Mom and Dad."



Happy 8th Birthday, Julia (1/11): "I can't believe you are eight! I hope your year is full of wonder and excitement! Love, Mommy."

Circle of Moms meets with police for holiday party

By Steve Smith
Courant Community

VERNON — The Circle of Moms held its third annual holiday party and invited the Vernon Police Department.

Families gathered for a buffet meal, followed by many games and activities, including bowling at the lanes on the lower level of the TKB Club in Rockville. Families were able to receive donated toys, and kids were able to “shop” among donated items for gifts for their parents.

Vicki White, the Circle of Moms coordinator, said that many of the children who have been part of the program have come to know their local police officers.

“The kids have gotten very close with the officers,” White said. “They really like that connection. They like knowing that, if there’s an emergency situation, they see a face they recognize, and that gives them a calming feeling. The officers, I’m told, enjoy it more than the kids do.”

White is a retired school bus driver, who began the group approximately seven years ago, seeking to bridge the gap for moms who might need help, but who are unaware of or perhaps intimidated by other support services.

Vernon Police Chief John Kelly agreed that the event is fun, but also serves a purpose.

“It’s a fantastic group,” Kelly said. “We’re fortunate to have partnered with them. We also do summer cookouts with them. The officers get to interact with the children, and it’s a win-win for all of us. They



Kids were able to bowl in the TKB Club basement, as part of the evening’s festivities. **STEVE SMITH/HARTFORD COURANT**

get a chance to see us out of uniform. We’ve played kickball with them and football. With the kids and the moms, we’ve been able to have conversations about a variety of things.”

“It’s just something happy to end the year. Everybody has a good time, everybody gets fed, everybody gets gifts,” White said, adding that several of the moms are newcomers, so it’s a great introduction to the group for them.

“They’re meeting new people, and making new

friends, which is what we need to do,” White said. “We’re making a close-knit community.”

Volunteers included 14 members of the Diamonds softball club, based in East Hartford, who also ran the toy drive to supply the presents for the children. The players were from towns as far away as Enfield and Southington.

“They volunteered tonight. They served the food, set up the gifts, and helped the kids with the crafts,” White said.

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FHS17

As Connecticut's unemployment rate falls, extra federal help for the jobless is withdrawn

By Stephen Singer
Hartford Courant

Extra federal help for the jobless will end next month as Connecticut's unemployment rate falls and the labor force rebuilds from the worst of the business lockdown caused by COVID-19.

The 13-week extension to regular state unemployment benefits was set to expire when the state's three-month average unemployment rate fell below 6.5%. The November rate dropped to 6% from 6.4% the previous month.

Fewer than half of the state's nearly 45,000 weekly filers for unemployment insurance rely on extended federal benefits. They will be notified that the program ends Jan. 8, the Connecticut Department of Labor said.

The average state unemployment benefit is \$366 a week, according to state officials. The loss of an additional 13 weeks amounts to nearly \$4,800.

An average of 3,266 jobless workers filed for unemployment claims in November, down by 236, or 6.7% from the previous month and off by nearly 54% from the average weekly count of 7,072 in November 2020. The level of monthly average weekly initial claims is now comparable to the February 2020 count just before COVID-19 forced many businesses to shut, the Department of Labor said.

"The economic trends in Connecticut are quite positive," Patrick Flaherty, research director at the Department of Labor, said with the release of November's employment data. "Our unemployment rate has fallen rapidly and our economic recovery is strong and stable."

Still, Connecticut's unemployment rate in November



Extra federal jobless benefits end next month as Connecticut's unemployment rate falls. **FILE**

tied it for 43rd among the states, with Alaska, Hawaii and Washington, D.C. It's the highest among the New England states.

"The expiration of federal benefits marks another milestone in Connecticut's gradual return to normalcy," said Eric Gjede, vice president for government affairs at the Connecticut Business & Industry Association. "Employers are looking for workers to fill tens of thousands of jobs, and hopefully the expiration of these benefits will encourage more people to return to the workforce."

In what's known as the "Great Resignation," workers in Connecticut and the rest of the U.S. are leaving their jobs in record numbers for better opportunities.

"This churn is opening up opportunities across almost all industry sectors — good news for those who are entering the market or looking for better employment," Flaherty said.

In October, the most recent month for which data are available, the quit rate in the U.S. slowed to about 4.2 million from approximately 4.4 million, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. The change in the quit rate in Connecticut was among the largest in the U.S., slowing to 36,000 from 43,000.

The pullback in federal aid has followed the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine that helped avoid the worst of the pandemic. In September, about 125,000 unemployed workers in Connecticut lost an extra \$300 in weekly federal unemployment benefits.

At its peak, federal aid amounted to as much as \$600 a week in 2020, supplementing state unemployment benefits and helping the jobless cope with long-term unemployment caused by the pandemic.

Stephen Singer can be reached at ssinger@courant.com.

REAL ESTATE

Want to live in a firehouse converted to apartments in downtown Hartford?

By Kenneth R. Gosselin
Hartford Courant

HARTFORD — Two historic properties in downtown Hartford — one, a century-old firehouse and both within a short walk of Bushnell Park — would likely be converted into apartments starting in late spring, with the projects completed by the end of 2023.

The city is negotiating a final sales agreement for the firehouse on Pearl Street and the former municipal building at 521-527 Main across from city hall with Wonder Works Construction Corp. of Brooklyn, N.Y., a longtime developer of apartment conversions in the downtown area.

The city council approved the sale of the two city-owned buildings, in December.

The firehouse, closed in 2020, is slated for a \$9 million conversion to 42 market-rate rentals, including 36 studios that would start from \$875 a month, and 6 one-bedroom units that would be from \$1,350 a month.

Wonder Works has confirmed it has signed a letter of intent and is negotiating a lease with a restaurant that would occupy the ground level of the firehouse. But so far, the developer has declined to identify the tenant.

Diagonally across Bushnell Park, the former municipal building on Main Street — with longtime tenants such as the Cornerstone Deli which would remain — would be fitted

out with 39 market-rate rentals — 28 studios and 11 one-bedroom apartments — in a \$74 million redevelopment.

The studios would start at \$950 a month and the one-bedrooms, at \$1,200 a month.

For both buildings the rent includes a parking space, Wonder Works said.

Both the firehouse and the former municipal building, the latter built in 1926, have been targeted for redevelopment for several years. The conversions would take place at the same time.

Daniel Klaynberg of Wonder Works and the son of founder and chairman Joseph Klaynberg said the Brooklyn company, which has developed 560 downtown apartments in the last decade, remain bullish on the city's prospects as it works to emerge from the pandemic.

"All of our buildings in Hartford are doing pretty well in terms of occupancy," Daniel Klaynberg said. "We've got 98% occupancy in all of our buildings. So, we're hoping that it is six months to absorb these units."

Those buildings include the Spectra properties, such as the converted Sonesta Hotel on Constitution Plaza and three buildings — two of them converted office buildings — near the corner of Trumbull and Pearl street in the heart of downtown Hartford.

The city has reached agreements with Wonder Works that

call for combined loans of \$4.9 million in city funds designated for economic development; tax breaks stretching out for a decade and deferral of paying the sale price for the two properties.

The purchase prices — \$360,000 for the firehouse and \$425,000 for 521-529 Main would not be paid until loans on the property are refinanced or the developer sells them. City officials say the arrangement will bring in developer financing for harder-to-convert properties and ultimately get the two building on the tax rolls.

The tax breaks involve payments to city coffers based on gross revenue, rather than assessed values. There would be no payments in the first three years and gradually rise to 7% by the tenth year after the buildings are ready for occupancy.

The agreement with the city also contemplates future apartment development on a parking lot behind 521-529 Main, bordering on Pulaski Circle and beyond it, Bushnell Park.

Wonder Works would lease the parking for \$32,500 annually for five years, with an option to buy the land for \$162,000.

Wonder Works has said it is possible to build up to 200 apartments on the site, and that could happen within five years.

Kenneth R. Gosselin can be reached at kgosselin@courant.com.

MANCHESTER

Plant-based restaurant 21 Oak closes; owner cites pandemic

By Susan Dunne
Hartford Courant

Plant-based eatery 21 Oak, a restaurant located at 21 Oak St. in Manchester for 6 ½ years, has closed permanently, becoming another restaurant casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shawn Dickensheets, the restaurant's owner and executive chef, said he tried to make a go of it since mid-2020 but finally decided to close.

"Before COVID, people would wait an hour to eat. People would be in to eat all day. Once we reopened, it was a trickle," Dickensheets said.

"We tried everything. Meals to go, specialty dinners, family packages, you name it. We redid the menu almost daily, depending on what produce would come in. When Delta hit, it died off again. And then lately, people are a little bit freaked out by

Omicron, and the town is thinking about masks again. The prices of everything went up, utilities, food, food containers. Now I have no money."

He added that during lockdown, "people learned new habits, cooking at home, using delivery services."

Dickensheets opened his little 750-square-foot eatery on July 4, 2015. He was eating a plant-based diet at the time and wanted to fill a niche in the plant-based restaurant scene.

"There were only eight vegetarian restaurants in the state and the closest was in Middletown. So there wasn't really any local competition," he said. "I had just come out of Divine Treasures [the vegan chocolatier in Manchester]. I was doing a pop-up eight-course dinner there once or twice a month, so I saw the demand for it. I knew I had that market."

Dickensheets said he doesn't know his next move yet.

He said he will take January off, work on a cookbook and look for a new job.

He said anyone who bought a gift card from 21 Oak can redeem it at Taso's Eggsellent Adventure, a breakfast-lunch spot at 550 Middle Turnpike East in Manchester. Dickensheets said he will add an item to the menu at Taso's but doesn't know what yet.

"I was worried about the gift cards. I have to live in town still," he said. "The owner at Taso's is a friend of mine. He helped me out even though his business is having a tough time as well. I hope he gets some new business out of it. Everyone's in the same boat, right?"

Susan Dunne can be reached at sdunne@courant.com.



21 Oak, a plant-based eatery that has been at 21 Oak St. in Manchester for six and a half years, has closed permanently, another restaurant casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic. **COURTESY OF SHAWN DICKENSHEETS**

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HOSPITAL BED: Like new. Must pick up. Very heavy. 860-798-7836.

DESK: With three large drawers, three smaller drawers, cubbies for separating items, roll-top closure. In good condition. Must pick up. 860-527-8731.

AMERICAN GIRL DOLL PATTERNS: For doll dresses. Molly, Josefina, Samantha, Felicity, Addy. 860-432-2808.

BED FRAME: Wood, mahogany, double bed frame. 860-268-3430.

TELEVISION: Vintage 1993 Magnavox 13" Color TV - excellent condition, 860-553-7385

TODDLER BED: Includes mattress. In excellent condition. 860-798-3097.

FIREWOOD: All hardwood. Cut to 15" length; not split. Must pick up. 860-690-4895.

QUESTIONS

FURNITURE: Seeking a light wooden chest having five drawers in good condition. Call after 5 p.m. 860-665-0141.

LOST BRACELET: Bracelet lost at ALDIs of Rocky Hill by carriages. It was a birthday gift. Call if found. 860-778-8556.

PUZZLE SWAP: Will meet half way if too far to go. Have 20, most new. 860-568-1378.

SEEKING ITEMS FOR GAS ENGINE: Need flywheel and electric starter for 8 H.P. Briggs and Stratton gas engine. 860-633-5329.

SEEKING: Small boat trailer for a 12' boat, will buy. 860-741-2633.

NECKLACE FOUND: On Carillon Drive, Rocky Hill. Call with description for return. 860-965-6672. Messages will be returned.

SNOW SHOVELING HELP: Senior looking for an individual to shovel out parking space and clean off car after snow storms in Collinsville. 860-305-6701.

CAR: Seeking automobile to help out with transportation in 2022. Elderly with low Social Security. 860-515-1488.

LAPTOPS: Collecting used or new laptops from kind donors. These laptops will be donated to school kids in Ghana. Contact Ben, 423-676-8815.

NAUTICAL ROPE: Looking for free ½- or ¾-inch nautical rope for DIY projects. 860-490-8956.

PROPANE: Seeking propane Salamander. Will pay a reasonable price. 860-749-2190.

LAWN MOWING, SNOW REMOVAL: Does anyone know of someone who mows grass and/or plows snow? 860-289-0101 after 5 p.m.

CAR: Seeking a donated good running car for elderly person in Putnam for doctor appointments. Cannot afford one. 508-335-5060. Leave a message.

Be a good neighbor

To submit, send an email to community@courant.com or mail to 285 Broad St., Hartford, CT 06115. Good Neighbor is a service by Courant Community. Questions and answers are provided by our readers and are not verified. Medical information cannot be published. Caution should be exercised at all times. The publisher is not responsible for damage to any person or property.



ALEX SYPHERS / SPECIAL TO THE COURANT



ALEX SYPHERS / SPECIAL TO THE COURANT

Manchester becoming hub of state's steampunk fandom

By Steve Smith
Courant Community

MANCHESTER — David Carlson was a fan of steampunk before he even knew what it was.

The Manchester social worker had been a fan of a certain style, or look, he'd seen in art, TV, and movies, but it was approximately nine years ago when he learned what it actually was.

Now, largely because of him, steampunk is really... er, picking up steam, in Connecticut.

"I knew I liked a certain look - a certain thing," Carlson said, describing steampunk as "Victorian science fiction."

"I didn't realize its name until I was exposed to it. I find that to be the case when other people see my post and say, 'Oh, what is steampunk?' Then they find out and they say, 'I've been into this all my life,'" he said.

Carlson formed Oddball Newt, an LLC events company, which works in conjunction with Silk City Steampunk, a community of steampunkers which he also helms. Each of the two generally holds one steampunk event per month.

January's event is a Victorian Skate Fantasy, and will take place at the Bolton Ice Palace.

"We have professional skaters and performers who skate around and do tricks," Carlson said. "We have regular folks who just want to skate. People even have the option of not going on the ice."

The February event, Stupid Cupid's ball, is in its seventh year, making it the longest-running steampunk event in the state.

"We have a band from the U.K. coming over, called Victor and the Bully," Carlson said, adding that The Eternal Frontier and Frenchy and the Punk are among other bands performing at the two-day event, Feb. 27 and 28 at Cheney Hall. The event includes the vendors, bands and a fashion show on Saturday, and a brunch event the following morning.

"There will also be various panels, discussing Victorian-themed topics," Carlson said. "We're expecting a pretty good showing, with folks coming from all over."

Perhaps surprisingly, the community has grown during the pandemic. Carlson said that was because



ALEX SYPHERS / SPECIAL TO THE COURANT

there was more outreach and advertising, and perhaps people were more willing to try something new, or something they've wanted to try, but haven't.

"Connecticut is actually known as a steampunk hub throughout the world," he said. "Some people find out there is a steampunk community in Connecticut and are excited about that. People in Connecticut are dying for this sort of thing. They're dying for community and ways to express themselves and get out there and do stuff."

People who attend the events often make their own costumes. Some adopt a persona or character that they stick with permanently, and others experiment and try new things often.

"They make it their own. We have a lot of professors, we have a lot of adventurers, we have a lot of Sky Captains," Carlson said. "We have a person who goes around calling himself 'Wendell the Thief.' It's really all up to the person's imagination. It's a fantastic community of very fascinating, talented people."

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/oddballnewtproductions, www.facebook.com/oddballnewstuff, or Silk City Steampunk's Facebook Group at www.facebook.com/groups/337502213408156.

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TOWN OF WILLINGTON REVENUE COLLECTOR'S NOTICE

To the taxpayers of the Town of Willington – the second installment of the taxes listed on the October 1, 2020 Grand List and the Motor vehicle supplemental tax becomes due and payable to the Town of Willington on January 1, 2022. Payments must be postmarked, paid online, or brought to our office by February 1, 2022 to avoid an interest charge. Interest will be charged on all delinquent bills at a rate of 1 ½% per month from the due date of January 1st, with a minimum charge of \$2 for each bill. All Tax bills under \$3 have been waived.

We encourage you to pay online at www.willingtonct.org (with fee), mail payment to our office, or drop payment in one of our drop boxes located outside the Town Office Building's front entrance. Our hours are Monday's 12:30 pm – 7:30 pm, Tuesday's – Friday's 9:00 am – 2:00 pm. We will be closed Monday January 17th in observance of Martin Luther King Day.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at 860-487-3111.

Failure to receive a bill does not invalidate the tax or interest per CT State Statute.

Janice C. Clauson
Willington Revenue Collector
40 Old Farms Rd
Willington, CT 06279

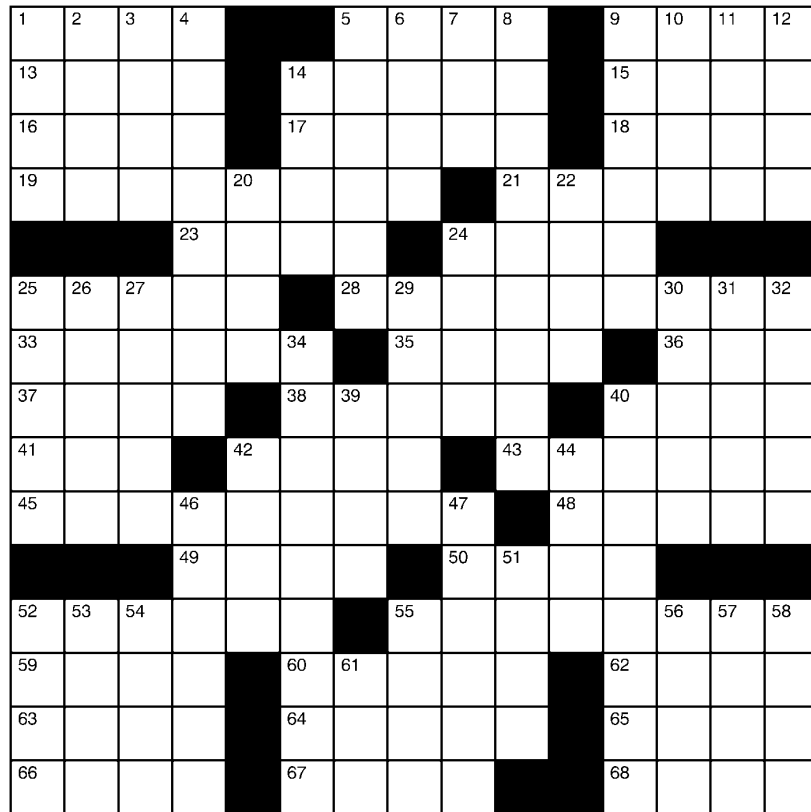


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By Charles Preston

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Community News

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Rhyme Time, a half hour of nursery rhymes, songs, and fingerplays, will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 11, at 6:30 p.m. This is a drop-in program that is designed to promote early language skills for ages birth to 24 months, accompanied by parents or caregivers.

Spooky Trails and Tall Tales of Connecticut with author Stephen Gencarella will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 12, at 6:30 p.m. Gencarella is a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where his work focuses on the folklore of New England.

All programs at the Enfield Public Library are free and all are welcome.

Grace Episcopal Church a drop-off point for diaper drive

NEWINGTON — Grace Episcopal Church, 124 Maple Hill Ave., is a regional drop-off point for the Episcopal Church of CT Deacon's Statewide Diaper Drive, to benefit the CT Diaper Bank.

The Diaper Bank is a not-for-profit collecting and distributing diapers to low income families throughout the state.

They partner with other community action groups to reach as many individuals and families as possible in their communities to bring basic health needs — including 75,000 diapers each week.

The wider community can participate by bringing a package of unopened diapers, sizes 3-6 to Grace Church at the above address and place in the blue bin on the front porch.

Packages can also be dropped off in the church office on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 4:30 p.m.

The collection is taking place through Jan. 15. Visit <https://www.thediaperbank.org> to make a financial donation to the CT Diaper Bank. Indicate EECT in the memo. Checks are also accepted at the church office.

For more information, contact The Rev. CJ Puskarz at 860-833-0750.

Contra dance taking place at Temple Beth Torah

WETHERSFIELD — A 2nd Saturday Contra will take place on Saturday, Jan. 8, from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. at Temple Beth Torah, 130 Main St.

Music will be provided by the Wild Notes and caller Rich Sbardella. A free beginner lesson will take place at 7:15 p.m.

Cost to attend is \$13 per person and \$5 per student. Masks, proof of vaccination and a waiver signature are required.

Visit <http://www.hcdance.org> for more information.

Playhouse on Park's Comedy Night series continues

WEST HARTFORD — Brian Scott McFadden and Bob DiBuono will co-headline Playhouse on Park's Comedy Night on Saturday, Jan. 8, at 8 p.m.

Playhouse on Park is located at 244 Park Road. Doors open 30 minutes prior to the show. Tickets are \$17.50, all seats reserved.

All patrons must be fully vaccinated. Vaccination cards, government issued IDs, and masks are required for all patrons. This policy is in effect through February 2022, and will be evaluated regularly. Visit www.playhouseonpark.org to view the full policy.

Tickets are now on sale for all 2021-22 Comedy Nights. For tickets, visit www.playhouseonpark.org or call 860-523-5900, ext. 10.

Congregation Beth Israel hosting events in January

WEST HARTFORD — Congregation Beth Israel, 701 Farmington Ave., is hosting the following events. Visit <https://cbict.org/> or call 860-233-8215 for more information.

Shabbark Shalom will take place on Jan. 8 and Feb. 8 at 3 p.m., at Rockledge Golf Course, 289 South Main St. The event features a walk and short Havdalah service. This activity is open to all; dogs are not required for participation. RSVP to mmeyer@cbict.org.

Tot Shabbat will take place on Jan. 15, Feb. 5 and 19, at 10:30 a.m. at Congregation Beth Israel. Email mmeyer@cbict.org to RSVP.

The Tribe: Torah on Tap will take place on Jan. 20 and Feb. 10 at 6:30 p.m. The monthly Torah on Tap is for young professionals and graduate students. RSVP to Cantor Kupfer at skupfer@cbict.org.

Empty Nester Dinner & Movie will take place on Saturday, Jan. 29 at 6 p.m. The evening includes a havdalah, dinner, movie and dessert. The cost is \$18 per person. Go to cbict.org to register. Questions? Contact Sunny Kagan at kydarlin54@gmail.com.

A Winter to Spring series of organ performances will feature Music Director Natasha Ulyanovsky on CBI's historic Austin organ with special guest performers. All concerts start at 6:30 p.m. and are free and open to the public.

The schedule is as follows: Jan. 14 with Monika Krajewska, Feb. 11 with Michelle Horsley, March 11 with Eric Birk &

Turn to Community News, Page 11

Community News

from Page 10

Bernadette Hoke Duo and April 22 with Virginius Barkauskas.

Adult Education Speaker Series: Registration is requested for all programs, which will take place on Zoom, unless otherwise indicated. All CBI adult education programs are free of charge.

A virtual tour of Jewish Rome with Sara Pavoncello will take place on Sunday, Jan. 9, at 1 p.m. Participants will learn about the history of the Jewish Community of Rome, the oldest in Europe, from its beginning in 161 BCE to modern times.

Meet Danny Abebe, author of "From Africa to Zion," will take place Sunday, Jan. 23, at noon and is presented in partnership with Congregation Torat El, of Oakhurst, N.J.

Christmas tree collection taking place in January

WEST HARTFORD — The West Hartford Department of Public Works will collect Christmas trees through Friday, Jan. 14. Collection began on Jan. 3. Crews will make two complete sweeps through town.

Residents are encouraged to put their trees at the curb (not in the street) on any day during the first week of collection to ensure pick-up. Crews may get ahead of schedule, weather permitting, and move into the next collection area.

During the final week of collection, Jan. 10 to 14, trees must be at the curb by 6 a.m. on your designated trash day. Drivers cannot return for trees put out after your trash day.

Trees are recycled into wood chips so remove all decorations and lights. (No artificial trees and no bags are allowed.)

Please assist during snowstorms by removing trees from the side of the road. Crews cannot dig out trees buried under snow.

Residents also have the option of bringing their trees to the town's Recycling Center at 25 Brixton Center from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. There are no weekend hours until April and an annual permit is required. Call the Department of Public Works at 860-561-8100 with questions.

Library hosting programs on music, appraisals, more

SIMSBURY — The Simsbury Public Library, 725 Hopmeadow St., is hosting the following events. Visit <http://www.simsburylibrary.info> or 860-658-7663, ext. 2112, for more information.

Music in the Afternoon: Red & Yellow will take place on Sunday, Jan. 9, from 2

to 3 p.m. Danny Reilert and Debra Argosy have been professional artists since the 1970s and will be performing songs they consider the soundtrack of American culture from 1920 to 1965. This is an in-person event.

Ask Mike the Appraiser: What's it Worth? Will take place virtually on Monday, Jan. 10, from 6 to 8 p.m.

Host Mike Ivankovich will introduce viewers to what determines value and reveal what your antiques, collectibles, or personal treasures are really worth today. Each attendee is invited to bring in one to two items to be appraised.

The Historical Awareness Series will take place on Wednesdays: Jan. 12 and 26, from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

This course seeks to connect attendees with a past that is at once unknown and intimate, invisible and visible. Attendees will learn that the imprint of history is everywhere in society today. The program is led by Lloyd Huie & Carol Clark-Flanagan and is an in-person event.

Telehealth How-to With the VNA will take place on Thursday, Jan. 13, from 1 to 2 p.m.

Nancy Sheetz, Executive Director for the Farmington Valley Visiting Nurse Association, will lead a seminar on how to prepare for your telehealth meeting. This event is co-sponsored with the Simsbury Senior Center and is an in-person event.

Avon Public Library presenting series on memory care

AVON — The Avon Free Public Library, 281 Country Club Road, will present a series of four monthly memory care programs beginning in January.

The first program, Dementia 101, will be presented through Zoom on Jan. 13 at 6:30 p.m.

Amina Weiland, Certified Dementia Practitioner and Resource Coordinator for the Hartford HealthCare Center for Healthy Aging, will define dementia, describe the most common forms of dementia including Alzheimer's, and identify the warning signs.

Following programs include Care for the Caregivers (Feb. 10) Healthy Eating for People Living with Dementia (March 24) and Activities for People Living with Dementia (April 21.) All programs will be presented online and registration is required. People living with dementia, caregivers, and anyone who wants to learn more about dementia are encouraged to attend.

The series is jointly sponsored by The Avon Senior Center, The Bloomfield Public Library, and The Canton Public Library.

To register or for more information, visit www.avonctlibrary.info or call the library at 860-673-9712.



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LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF WILLINGTON REVENUE COLLECTOR'S NOTICE

To the taxpayers of the Town of Willington – the second installment of the taxes listed on the October 1, 2020 Grand List and the Motor vehicle supplemental tax becomes due and payable to the Town of Willington on January 1, 2022. Payments must be postmarked, paid online, or brought to our office by February 1, 2022 to avoid an interest charge. Interest will be charged on all delinquent bills at a rate of 1½% per month from the due date of January 1st, with a minimum charge of \$2 for each bill. All Tax bills under \$3 have been waived.

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If you have any questions, please contact our office at 860-487-3111.

Failure to receive a bill does not invalidate the tax or interest per CT State Statute.

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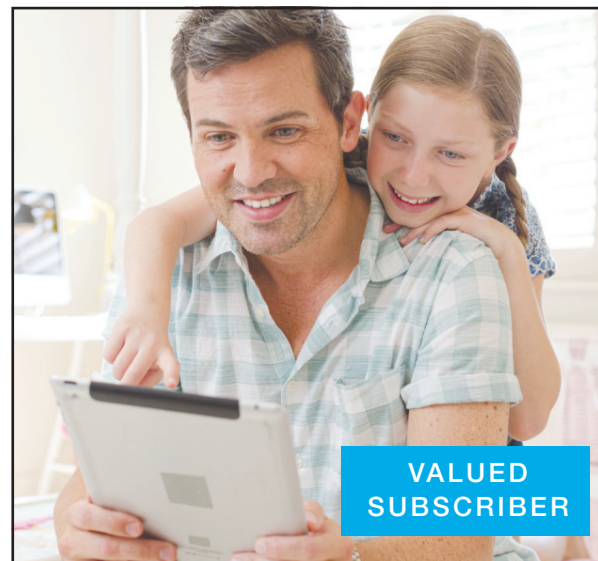


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TRIBUNE
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Wrangling the new Bronco

By William Heald
Special To Courant Community

Once in a very blue moon (a great song by Nanci Griffith, in addition to a classic expression), an automaker uses their vast resources to bring an old model back from the grave.

In this case we're talking about the Ford Bronco, and while the name was used on a variety of models over the years (including the Bronco II), it never really achieved the original's outstanding off-road utility that dispatched many a trail back in the 1960s and 1970s. Eventually the name disappeared entirely, in the latter 1990s.

But after this long hiatus, and spurred on by the amazing popularity of classic SUV designs like the Jeep Wrangler, Ford devoted an enormous team of designers and engineers to create a new 4X4 Bronco that would be the ultimate off-road vehicle.

The project was to blend the past and present into a formidable package that would hopefully topple Jeep from its lofty perch atop the mountain of off-road popularity.

Will they succeed? As you will see, the new Bronco is certainly equipped to give the Jeep a run for its money.

Available in 2 and 4-Door versions, our Bronco was the latter and built on a tight 100.4-inch wheelbase. There are a myriad of versions available including Base, Big Bend, Black Diamond, Outer Banks, Badlands and Wildtrak primary trim levels. The two engines on offer include a 2.3-Liter EcoBoost Turbocharged Inline Four with 275 horsepower (300 if you run Premium

fuel) and a 2.7-Liter EcoBoost Turbo-charged V6 with 315 horsepower (330 with Premium). The 2.3-Liter gets two transmission choices including a 7-Speed manual and a 10-Speed Automatic.

The 2.7-Liter comes standard with the 10-Speed. Our 2-Door was the Badlands version with the optional 2.7-Liter (and they also charge extra 10-Speed automatic, the only gearbox available), which proved to be a strong powertrain although the 10-Speed did a lot of shifting in an effort to optimize both power distribution and fuel economy. The Advanced 4X4 Transfer case included 2WD, 4 Hi and low and Automatic modes as well as the G.O.A.T mode select system (Goes Over Any Terrain). All this wizardry included Crawl Control (cruise control for mountain goats), and rear and optional front locking differentials.

A tight turning radius and the excellent ground clearance courtesy of the optional Sasquatch Package with larger 35-inch tires makes short work of even rugged trails, and the low-end torque of the 2.7-Liter was most welcome. Also part of the Sasquatch option was a removable molded hardtop, which rattled, but Ford has a fix on the way.

Lots of road noise and a busy ride makes for less than stellar on-road driving, but interior room is good as is Ford's Sync 4 interface system.

The doors are removable, and this Bronco could tow a 3,500-pound trailer.

The 2021 Ford Bronco Advanced 4X4 Black Diamond is EPA rated 17 MPG city, 17 highway and has a base price of \$36,845. With options, our sticker came to \$47,990. www.ford.com



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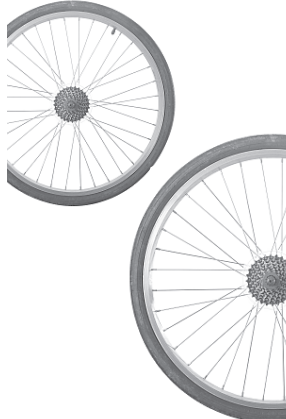
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Brighten Your Home With Holiday Cacti

By Dawn Pettinelli, UConn Home & Garden Education Center

The holidays are a time for gift giving and decorating. Many of us will purchase or receive holiday cacti with their brilliant, cascading blooms. While pink and reddish forms are most common, newer hybrids are available in white, apricot, salmon, yellow, and orange.

The group holiday cacti includes the Christmas cactus, *Schlumbergera bridgessi*, the Thanksgiving cactus, *Schlumbergera truncatus*, and the Easter cactus, *Schlumbergera gaertneri*. The common name is derived from the holiday closest to traditional bloom dates although more recent hybrids have a more extensive blooming period.

The Thanksgiving cactus is sometimes known as the crab's claw or lobster cactus because the outer leaf margins are pointed like hooks or claws. Christmas cacti have smaller, smooth edged stem segments, and Easter cacti exhibit bristles at the end of each leaf and in between the segment joints.

All three varieties are easy to grow, have similar cultural requirements and are seldom bothered by pests. Their native habitat is Brazil where they grow on the high branches of tropical trees. They prefer a soil high in organic matter. Commercial soilless mixes are fine but if you prefer to create your own, one source suggests 2 parts peat moss to 1 part perlite to 1 part sand.

A common complaint is bud drop. This occurs for several reasons including temperatures that are too high, exposures to drafts, insufficient light, under or over watering, low humidity or exposure to fumes from gas burning stoves. Holiday cacti prefer to be on the dry side while forming buds, during bloom times and when not actively growing which is generally from October to April.

During periods of active growth, plants should be watered whenever the soil begins to feel dry to the touch. Holiday cacti require excellent drainage and should not be allowed to sit in saucers filled with water. Plants can be fertilized once a month from April to October with a water-soluble balanced fertilizer such as 20-20-20 or the equivalent. Ideally the middle number (phosphorus) on the fertilizer package should be the same or higher than the first number (nitrogen) for optimum blooms.

Most holiday cacti will appreciate being set outside in a shady place for the summer. As the days get shorter in September, bud formation begins. Begin to slightly decrease the amount of water plants are receiving and move them indoors. You'll get more flowers if plants are exposed to 15 or so hours of uninterrupted darkness each day starting about September 15th. Perhaps they can be placed in a little used room. Ideal temperatures are 60 to 70 degrees F days and 55 to 60 degrees F nights. After 4 to 8 weeks, flower buds will appear. Plants may then be left in normal light.

The short day treatment can be administered to Easter cacti beginning January first. I leave mine at the office, which seems to work fine as the lights are usually turned off at 5.

Holiday cacti do not require frequent repotting. Usually, once every three years is sufficient. Check the drainage holes for excessive root growth and repot in spring if necessary. Although somewhat slow growing, holiday cacti are extremely long-lived producing a more spectacular show each year. I have one that is 20 years old and one that is 31 years old.

All holiday cacti are easily propagated by rooting the flat, segmented leaves. Cuttings can be placed in moist sand or vermiculite and kept moist and out of direct sunlight.

Enjoy the beautiful blossoms of your Christmas cactus over the coming holidays. Don't forget to take care of it during the rest of the year. It will bloom for many more holiday seasons to come.

If you have questions about holiday cacti or on any other home and garden topic, feel free to contact us, toll-free at (877) 486-6271 or visit the UConn Home & Garden Education Center's website at www.ladybug.uconn.edu.

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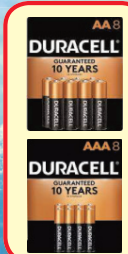
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